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Home » **SAFETY**

## SAFETY ARTICLE



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### AAA Analysis Finds Teen Crashes Cost Society More Than \$34 Billion Annually

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*AAA calls for improved graduated driver licensing to counter nearly one million crashes involving 15- to 17-year olds annually*

A first-ever analysis from AAA finds that crashes involving teen drivers ages 15 to 17 cost American society more than \$34 billion annually in medical expenses, lost work, property damage, quality of life loss and other related costs in 2006.

"The impact of a teen crash extends beyond the emotional tragedies and physical injury at the crash scene, with costs that can extend to employers, families, the government and society overall," said AAA President and CEO Robert L. Darbelnet. "These economic figures provide one more reason for legislators to improve graduated driver licensing in their states - a proven measure governments can take to reduce the deadly toll of teen driver crashes."

Comprehensive graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems ease teens into driving through a combination of mandatory practice and limited driving at night and with peer passengers. Comprehensive GDL systems have been shown to reduce fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers by an average of 38 percent, according to a 2007 report from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and Johns Hopkins University. AAA is a leading advocate for teen driver safety issues and remains committed to encouraging states to improve upon their graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems.

According to the analysis conducted by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation for AAA, drivers ages 15 to 17 in 2006 were involved in about 974,000 crashes, injuring 406,427 people and killing 2,541.

The \$34.4 billion cost in 2006 included \$9.8 billion in cost from fatal crashes, with an average cost of \$3.841 million per fatality. Injury crashes averaged \$50,512, with their large numbers producing a total cost of \$20.5 billion - more than twice the cost of fatal crashes. Property damage crashes accounted for the remaining \$4.1 billion in cost.

"Some of these costs are paid directly by government through Medicaid, police, paramedics and courts. Many other costs - like lost wages, traffic delay and reduced quality of life - don't show up directly, but also reflect the very large, very real cost of crashes involving teen drivers," said Darbelnet. "States that improve their graduated driver licensing programs will reduce crashes, injuries, and deaths for road users of all ages and reduce crash-related costs that are paid by the state, too."

The cost of teen crashes was calculated using modeling that researchers at PIRE have used for economic analysis for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The analysis draws upon a broad range of databases and research involving crashes, injury types, medical costs by state and more.

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[« Back](#)